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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0144/01 0420635
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 110635Z FEB 09
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0871
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8914
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0366

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000144

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies February 11 gave extensive coverage to former First Lady Wu Shu-chen, who appeared in court and pleaded guilty to forgery but denied the corruption charges against her Tuesday. News coverage also centered on the island's sagging economy, and on Taiwan's inclusion in the United Kingdom's six-month visa waiver program starting in March. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's upcoming visit to Asia and suggested Taiwan take full advantage to win some favorable bargaining chips for itself. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said "[B]y sending the Secretary of State so soon to China, the Obama administration is emphasizing that ties with Beijing will continue to be among the US's most strategic - and carefully navigated - relationships." The article concluded by saying that it hopes "Taiwan does not become a mere bargaining chip." A "Taipei Times" op-ed piece, written by a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of the United States, on the other hand, discussed the defense white paper China released in late January. The article said "the defense paper seems to be ... attempting to push out US influence to domesticate the Taiwan issue." End summary.

¶2. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

A) "New Opportunities in Taiwan-U.S. Relations"

Paul Lin, a political commentator based in Taiwan, wrote in his column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 700,000] (2/11):

"For her first overseas trip since taking office, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will visit four East Asian countries including Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China. The preliminary plan was to visit Japan alone first, and the three other countries were added [to her itinerary] afterwards. It is thus obvious that in the U.S. global strategy, Japan remains a primary focus among the Asian nations. Taiwan should be pleased [about such a situation] since Washington and Tokyo still maintain their security alliance, which is also related to Taiwan. ...

"But Secretary Clinton, who is in charge of foreign affairs (including Sino-U.S. relations), is [former President Bill] Clinton's wife, and most of the U.S. officials now dealing with Chinese affairs were key members of President Clinton's administration. As a result, it appears on the surface that Washington's [position] will more or less remain unchanged in terms of cross-strait issues. But given that Hillary Clinton is a political figure who sticks to her own personal opinion, it is hard to tell whether there will be any change [in Washington's cross-strait policy]. ... But the situation will be favorable for Taiwan if issues such as freedom, human rights and [regional] security can attract Washington's attention, because the unification/independence argument in Taiwan is fundamentally a matter of completely different value systems between Taiwan and China. ... It goes without saying that the United States'

cross-Straits policy will not be swayed by one's emotions. But Taiwan should take full advantage of its edges to strive to win some favorable bargaining chips for itself. "

B) "Keep the 'Separatist' Issue Separate"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/11):

"On Thursday, the administration of US President Barack Obama set the tone for its foreign policy when it confirmed that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's first trip abroad would be to East Asia. ... Over the last year, economic concerns have pushed their way to the fore of an American psyche that had focused on security concerns since the Sept. 11 attacks. There can be no doubt that Clinton's meetings in China, the US' single largest creditor, will be the highlight of the tour. They will certainly be the most watched and will be pivotal to US interests at home and in the region. By sending the secretary of state so soon to China, the Obama administration is emphasizing that ties with Beijing will continue to be among the US' most strategic - and carefully navigated - relationships.

"Speculation already abounds about what will be said in Beijing. A recent Washington Post report was cause for concern among friends of Taiwan waiting to see what stance Obama will take on cross-strait matters. The paper said that some experts foresaw a risk that China 'may demand a freer hand on Taiwan and Tibet in exchange for working with the United States on reducing emissions.' Sources at the State Department were quick to rebuff those concerns when contacted by the Taipei Times, insisting the US would not 'sell Taiwan down the river.' But compromise is the stuff of diplomacy: That China would seek to further its interests in Taiwan in this RELATIONS

manner is a scary but hardly unlikely scenario. ...

"Despite the daunting scale of environmental problems in China, Beijing might find it a more appealing bargaining chip with the US than promising political and social freedoms. And while the Chinese Communist Party does not see respecting human rights as key to staying in power, it seems aware that environmental issues will have to be faced at some point. Let's just hope Taiwan does not become a mere bargaining chip."

13. Cross-Straits Relations

"The Shift in China's Taiwan Policy"

Yu Tsung-chi, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of the United States, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/11):

"... If one reads between the lines, last month's 105-page [Chinese defense] white paper shed some light on subtle changes in the security function of interaction among the US, China and Taiwan, which deserves consideration by those who are concerned about Taiwan. Beijing used to urge Washington to pressure Taipei and treat it as a troublemaker, but the defense paper shows that China seems to be shifting in a new direction, attempting to push out US influence to domesticate the Taiwan issue. Beijing seems determined to win a tug-of-war between Sino-US and Taiwan-US relations. Although it may never openly admit it, one of Beijing's ulterior motives is to gradually weaken US influence on the Taiwan issue through China's rising economic, diplomatic and military clout. ...

"The paper not only played down China's military buildup opposite Taiwan, but also declared 'China will never engage in military expansion now or in the future, no matter how developed it becomes,' although it still treated Taiwanese independence as a potential threat. These messages aim to create the impression that China's rise is peaceful, that the two sides of the Straits have resolved their sovereignty dispute and that US arms sales to Taiwan not only violate international law but also constitute interference in China's domestic affairs and an attempt at sabotaging cross-strait peace. ...

"Good reasons exist for analyzing China's new strategy. Direct

military coercion has been replaced by an indirect three-in-one approach that draws on psychology, the media and law. ...In other words, China's three-pronged strategy aims to weaken morale and obfuscate the designation of the 'enemy' by influencing public opinion and seeking support from domestic and international audiences for its military actions. ... Taiwan as a democracy is poorly organized and unready for China's three-pronged strategy, because no international organization or court of justice, nor the US, can protect Taiwan from a psychological campaign that is protean and cannot be legally adjudicated. ... Faced with China's overwhelming military, economic and ideological threats, Taiwan can only survive if its democratic values are secure, its citizens loyal and its soft power effective enough to achieve objectives beyond its hard power. ..."

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